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STATE OF MONTANA
DIVISION OF FORENSIC SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
275 West Front Street, Missoula, MT 59802 (406) 728-4970

Ronald L. Rivers, M.D.
State Medical Examiner

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Laboratory Bureau Chief

Dawn M. Kangas
Administrative Assistant

SHELVED WITH PERIODICALS

JUNE 1983

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

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DEATH INVESTIGATION COURSES

JUNE 13-17	CHICAGO ASCP (PATHOLOGISTS ONLY)
JUNE 16-18	DETROIT, MICHIGAN - (313) 577-1180
JUNE 12-17	SUMMIT COUNTY, COLORADO (INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CORONERS AND MEDICAL EXAMINERS) - (216) 721-5610

NWAFS

The Northwestern Association of Forensic Scientists met in Missoula this year with attendees from Washington, Idaho, South Dakota, California, Oregon, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Nevada. Papers presented by our staff included:

PROPERTIES OF PRIMATE HAIR - Arnie Melnikoff
THC IN MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITIES - Jim Hutchison
PRECISION IN REPORT WRITING - Bill Newhouse

MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITIES

Last month presentations were made to the Montana Coroner's Association, Montana Dispatchers School, the U of M premedical students, and several Students Against Drunk Driver programs in Glendive, Butte, Billings, Polson and Corvallis.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Ken Konzak taught groups on Sexual Assault Evidence in Townsend, White Sulphur Springs, Harlowtown, Roundup, Red Lodge and Butte.

Bill Newhouse attended the Association of Firearms and Toolmark Examiners meeting in California.

HAVE A NICE SUMMER!

JUNE 1983

ON CALL SCHEDULE - MONTANA STATE MEDICAL EXAMINER

275 W. Front Street
Missoula, Montana 59802

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4 RON RIVERS
5 RON RIVERS	6	7	8	9	10	11 KEN MUELLER
12 KEN MUELLER	13	14	15	16	17	18 JOHN PFAFF
19 JOHN PFAFF	20	21	22	23	24	25 RON RIVERS
26 RON RIVERS	27	28	29	30		

Telephone Numbers: State Office - 728-4970
WATS Line - 243-5796

Home Phone: Dr. Ron Rivers- 728-2033 (Home)
(week nights call unless otherwise indicated)

Dr. John Pfaff - Great Falls
Hospital - 727-3333
Home - 727-3905

Dr. Ken Mueller- Billings
Hospital - 657-7000
Home - 248-3024

BONES & SKELETONS
JUNE 1983
R. L. Rivers, M.D.

"Doggone it, Chief, look what Ed and Sam just brought in."

Within the big grocery bag were several big bones and a bunch of broken pieces. "Geez! Where did they find these?", asked the chief.

"Down by the creek. Said there were a bunch more around but it was getting dark.", responded the sergeant.

"Well", the chief said, "Let's call the coroner and we'll get a backhoe down there in the morning."

The next afternoon several more bones were found but in such a scattered manner that no original location could be determined.

"Hey Digger!", the sergeant yelled to the coroner, "Want to send these to the F.B.I.? Maybe they belong to that gal that disappeared from here in 1972."

"No sir", responded the coroner, "Label them, pack them carefully and send them with a scene diagram to the Forensic Laboratory in Missoula."

"Gosh", thought the sergeant to himself, "What the heck can the crime lab do? They aren't anthropologists."

"What do you think, Digger?", asked the Chief. "Don't suppose this is a murder of some kind do you?"

"Nope", responded the coroner, "If we did, we would be handling this a lot differently.

QUESTIONS:

1) How should human skeletal remains be handled if foul play cannot be ruled out?

2) Why send bones to the Division of Forensic Science instead of the F.B.I. or the University?

BONES & SKELETONS
JUNE 1983
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ANSWERS:

1. If foul play cannot be ruled out then the skeletal remains should be handled as if they were Jimmy Hoffa's. The point is that the case may be the most important case in the history of the country. When Associated press, United Press and "60 Minutes" are camping on the front steps of the Chief's office, he will want to have the best investigation possible.

   Human bones, especially smaller bones, are hard to recognize at many scenes. A forensic pathologist or forensic anthropoligist is skilled at recovering fragments and eliminating many animal bones.

   Most important, however, is the preservation of evidence at the scene. Shallow graves deserve meticulous investigation and must be examined methodically. Plants, insects, and maggots in and surrounding the grave are useful in determining the age of the grave. Teeth, which often fall out of the skull, can identify the victim and help tell the age at the time of death. Corroded ear studs, rings and bullets are very hard to distinguish from the soil and pebbles around the body. The small fragile U-shaped hyoid bone of the neck is important evidence. It may be broken and even harder to locate.

   Of course, evidence surrounding the grave such as cigarette butts, matches, chewing gum wrappers, etc. may contribute to solving the case.

   Remember that there is a forensic pathologist available 24 hours a day. When necessary, the Division can provide a scene visit at no cost to the county.

2. Bones are examined immediately by me and a call is returned to the agency as soon as possible. This eliminates the sometimes considerable delay sending material to Washington D.C. Animal bones are identified as such and can prevent a costly and time consuming search. A human skull can often be aged, sexed, and raced rapidly to confirm or eliminate a suspected identification.

   All material sent to the Division is treated as evidence and maintained as such. Then the medical examiner can testify on bones and save counties the costs of transporting university experts.

   And speaking of experts, I'll be the first to say that the anthropologists in D.C. and the University are better than I. After my review, the bones will also be examined by an anthropologist for a formal report.